

[Shri S. M. Banerjee]

know, Sir, amendments are moved upto 3 P. M. Now it is 4.20. I would request you to allow us as a special case to move amendments upto 5.30 or 6 P. M.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You can give amendments till 5 P. M.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : (Diamond Harbour) : On a point of order, Sir. You have not only been misled by the Table but you have been equally misled by the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. His actions are unparliamentary. The rules are very clear on the subject. Rule 74 clearly says that when a Bill is introduced, the motion can be moved that it be referred to a Joint Committee. Now, has anybody under rule 74 formally moved a motion with the intention of sending the Bill to a Joint Committee ?

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE : I have moved it.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Before my friend Mr. Banerjee, my friend from this side, Shri Shambunath, also made that request.

SHRI S.M. BANERJEE : He mentioned it, but I moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Your motion is not in order.

SHRI RAJ BAHADUR : When a Bill is introduced, at any subsequent occasion the member in charge may make one of the following motions in regard to the Bill, and one of them is reference to the Select Committee of the House. I can move it even now.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAJEE : But he is not in charge of the Bill.

SHRI RAJ BAHADUR : I do not know whether Shri Jyotirmoy Basu is more parliamentary or the chair is more parliamentary.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : As far as the chair is concerned, the powers are quite well-defined. Rule 89 says that the Speaker may, if he thinks fit, postpone the consideration of the clause, not the Bill. As far as rule 74 is concerned....

MR. CHAIRMAN : Kindly read rule 109.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : I am referring to the rule relating to reference to Select Committee, and that is rule 74.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Rule 75 (2) (b) says :

"If the member in charge moves that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee of the House, or a Joint Committee of the Houses with the concurrence of the Council, any member may move as an amendment that the Bill be referred to a Joint Committee of the Houses with the concurrence of the Council or a Select Committee, as the case may be, or that the Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by a date to be specified in the motion."

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री (पटना) : सभापति जी, मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि यह सेलेक्ट कमेटी में कब भेजा जा रहा है ? इसे सेलेक्ट कमेटी में जाना है तो कब तक जाना है ? कल जायेगा या अगले सेशन में जायेगा ?

सभापति महोदय : कल जायेगा ?

16.22 hrs.

DISCUSSION RE : DROUGHT CONDITIONS IN WEST BENGAL

MR. CHAIRMAN : We will now take up the discussion of the drought conditions in West Bengal.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA (Contai) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, when I am raising this discussion on the drought situation in West Bengal, the sun is blazing furiously over that land and I see in my mind's eye millions of people thronging round the few remaining tanks and tube wells in the rural areas for a bucketful of water and waiting there from morning till dusk and many of

them have to come back without even one tumblerful of water. Today in most of the districts of West Bengal, particularly in the districts of Malda, Purulia, Bankura, Midnapur and others, the situation has become so terrible that most of the streams tanks and tube-wells are drying up. There is no water and people every where are crying for water with tears in their eyes. The Prime Minister during her recent visit to the drought affected areas of West Bengal was somewhat moved by this acute scarcity of water and she had also to accept that the drought situation in West Bengal has become extremely terrible.

In recent memory West Bengal has had not witnessed such a terrible situation, such an unprecedented drought situation that has over whelmed the whole people of West Bengal, particularly some of the districts I have already mentioned. The Delhi press is usually very responsive and sympathetic to West Bengal issues and problems but, unfortunately, I do not know what happened, this time even scanty report on the serious situation of West Bengal drought did not appear in the Delhi press.

Perhaps, the responsibility for this is not of the Delhi press only but the responsibility lies squarely with the Government of West Bengal. Even when Mr. P. C. Sen and some of the leaders of the Congress organisation, at least whose personal integrity is well known in West Bengal, started walking in different drought affected areas, making appeal after appeal to the Government to take prompt and immediate steps. If the Government could do nothing else, at least they could have provided some water in the rural areas. The Government of West Bengal did not care to take note of it in time.

When we were issuing statements, writing letters to the Chief Minister, they did not care even to reply. But some how or other, when the report came to the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister made an air-dash, and when this report came to the West Bengal Government, suddenly, the West Bengal Government became aware of the gravity of this situation. A day before, the West Bengal Government did not believe the report of the Sub-Divisional Officers and the District Magistrates regarding

drought problems. In the last 15 to 20 days, the report of the Sub-Divisional Officers the District Magistrates were coming to the Writers' Building. But they did not care. Just to create an impression in the mind of their high-boss, the Prime Minister of India, when she was going to make an air-dash to the drought-affected areas, suddenly, the Writers Building, the Ministers there, became very much aware of the seriousness of the situation developing in West Bengal and they immediately asked all the Ministers to make in or the spot enquiry of different districts. In one day, they went to different districts and came back. Again just to create an impression, not on the people of West Bengal but on somebody else, they had their Cabinet meeting, a very-late-night Cabinet meeting and then, coming out of that Cabinet meeting, the Chief Minister of West Bengal made a dramatic announcement to the press. He said it in Bengali, saying: "I have given an order late at night to tackle the problem of the drought situation in West Bengal on a war footing."

I am happy that at least even at a late hour, they have become aware of it; they have given up their sluggish mentality in dealing with the serious situation of drought in West Bengal.

As I said, the situation has become so terrible there that there is no water. Almost all the streams, tanks and tubewells have dried up. Most of the tubewells are out of operation. Not only so. Most of the *aus* crop has been lost. The Government has given the figure. I do not know to what is the extent of the loss of crops. They have said that it has been lost to the tune of Rs. 36 crores. I do not know what will be the exact amount.

There is another serious thing and that is that jute—this is tune of jute production—is also lost to the extent of Rs. 44 crores. I do not know. If the Government's figure is correct. It may be more or it may be less. Only they can say.

When we are talking of land ceiling, when we are talking of land reforms, innumerable reports of distress sale of land by agriculturists in different districts of West Bengal are coming in. That means, just for

[Shri Samar Guha]

a morsel of food or a bucketful of water, the agriculturists are being compelled to give up their own means of livelihood, a few pieces of their lands. This distress sale of land is going on. It has come in the press, in West Bengal, that in many tribal areas, again, out of a sense of desperation, an acute helplessness, many of the tribal people in the form of groups have tried to seize paddy from others.

16.30 hrs.

[SHRI R. D. BHANDARE *in the Chair*]

These things are growing and will grow because the starvation situation is fast leading to a near-famine condition in West Bengal.

Again, Sir, you will realise what the scarcity of drinking water means. Unless the problem of scarcity of drinking water is tackled expeditiously, there is every possibility of a large scale outbreak of epidemic of gastro enteritis.

Then, mango is the only cash crop in these two districts of Malda and West Dinajpur. The whole of their economy depends on this. . .

AN HON. MEMBER : Murshidabad also.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : Yes ; in these three districts of Malda, West Dinajpur and Murshidabad. This time mango is completely finished ; no mango at all. That means, the whole of the economy of those areas—Malda, West Dinajpur and Murshidabad—will be crushed. The silk plantation, the mulberry plantation in Malda and Murshidabad areas, is completely blazed out, completely lost. That will also seriously affect the economy of one block of the district that was depending on the silk production of the area. This is the situation—tragic as it is.

Our truncated State of West Bengal, since independence, unfortunately, has not been able to come out of the orbit of crisis. There have been crises after crises—some crises due to natural calamities and some crises due to political calamities—coming in turns or simultaneously. The ill-fated people of West Bengal have been facing tragedies of crises, economic and political for the last 25 years.

Before I deal with the other aspects, the concrete and practical aspects, I want to know from the Government whether the Central Government and the State Government—because there is no way to differentiate between the Central Government and the State Government ; they belong to the same political fraternity, an absolute political fraternity ; there are no different responsibilities ; the Government is really one ; there are only two different facades—, to meet this unprecedented situation, this terrible situation, that has been created in West Bengal as a result of continued drought, whether the Central Government and also its counter-part in the State—not counter-part actually, its ancillary in the State—are really seriously desirous, of tackling this problem share really serious of tackling this problem, then here and now West Bengal should be declared as a drought area. The Minister may ask, even the Chief Minister of West Bengal may ask, what is the good of declaring it a drought area ; they may say that the Centre is giving money and they are trying to do everything. But, Sir, there is an obligation. As soon as this is declared as a drought area, so far as the question of finding funds for dealing with the situation is concerned, it will become the mutual obligation of the Centre and the State. Secondly, as it happened in the case of Bihar drought, as soon as you declare it a drought area, it will create a national, and to a certain extent international, awareness about the seriousness of the situation there. Thirdly, it will create a sense of urgency, not only at the Central level but also at the State level, that the whole problem has to be tackled expeditiously. If Shri Siddhartha Shankar Ray wants to take the things seriously, if he wants to tackle the whole problem on a war footing, then West Bengal should be declared as a drought area. Then and then only, it will mean that they are serious of tackling the whole problem on a war footing. Therefore, I demand the first prerequisite for dealing with the drought situation in West Bengal is to declare it as a drought-affected area.

Secondly, I hope at least during this crisis of natural calamity when the whole people of West Bengal are involved in a terrible situation, at least I should expect that the men who belong to the ruling community, those who are controlling the

administration, should have at least that mental outlook, I should say, courage and vision also, to rise above Party considerations. I think they should invite the co-operation of all political Parties, not only Political Parties, of social organisations and all other organizations and humanitarian bodies to deal with the situation. I am sorry to say that there is not an iota of any initiative on the part of the West Bengal Government to request or invite the other political Parties or other organizations to co-operate with the Government to deal with the situation.

It has become the business of the Ministers and the MLAs. You will be astonished to know that when crores of rupees are going to be spent, there is instruction issued at all levels, even at the Block level, Sub-divisional level and at the level of the Districts that no test relief scheme and no G.R. scheme and no tube-well project will be sanctioned without the approval of the local MLA, that means now the Congress MLAs. That is the approach. Not only that, there is another interesting thing. Now, in the midst of this calamity and in the midst of all this horror of the people, they are trying to take advantage of the suffering of the people and trying to create an image of the Congress and you know it has been said by the Government that the worst affected districts are Purulia, Midnapore, Bankura, Birbhum, Malda and other areas are also by and large affected. But there is a report in the Press. What is that report? That is of the Minister rushing back from their constituencies after a hurried survey of the scarcity situation there. What is the decision they have taken? They have taken a decision that they will set up 35 tube wells in 335 blocks. What does that mean? It means that they have developed an arithmetic of average of their own. That means that there is no question of giving priority to worst affected areas. But each Minister and each MLA are competing with the other just to get the benefit of relief to their constituencies. That benefit may come from the Centre. That benefit may come from the State Government also. Just to make equal distribution for all the districts. Why? So that all MLAs and Ministers and several other people may get something for their constituencies.

Sir, there is a spirit of suspicion in our mind. Are you serious? If they had been

serious, this averaging—35 tube wells for each Block should not be there. There should have been such variation—more for the affected areas and less for the less affected areas. But, that is not so. Not only that, from the Writers Building, from the Government side; some information was given to the Press that already some tube wells have been set up in the Purulia area. Immediately a contradiction came from the Chatra Parishad. They have made a public statement where they said that it is wrong. It came in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. It also came in the *Hindustan Standard*, that no tube wells have been set up there (*Interruptions*) My dear young friend, it will be very painful for me to pick up any controversy with you. I want to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to this fact. Let there be not too much publicity without doing anything. The Government has to do concrete, tangible work, instead of making some flamboyant statements to the press, to build the image of some political leader here or there or in some other place.

There is another interesting report. One Minister coming from Nadia district made some interesting press statement in the Writers Building. He said, "In Nadia district we have given order for setting up of 2,000 tube wells." What does it mean? Nadia district is affected, but certainly not as much affected as the others. If they sink 2,000 tubewells in Nadia district, that means, in other districts also it will be 2,000 and on an average total will be 30,000 tubewells for 15 districts. But, Sir, there is a contradiction in the statement of the hon. Minister, Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed in the Rajya Sabha. He said, West Bengal will sink 4,000 tube wells. Shri Siddhartha Shankar Ray said in the statement earlier that they have given instruction for immediate sinking of 12,000 tube wells. Why there is this contradiction? How does these things tally?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI
ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE) : Nothing
prevents the State Government from taking
up larger programme. There is no contradiction
in what the Chief Minister of West
Bengal and the hon. Minister of Agriculture
said.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA There should not be any flamboyant statement. One Minister says, there are going to be 2,000 tubewells in one district. That means, 30,000 will be new tube wells for whole of West Bengal. There is the statement of the Chief Minister that 12,000 tube wells are going to be sunk there. I don't want anybody to take any political advantage out of the situation. Let us all rise above political or party considerations and tackle this issue as a united people.

The need of the hour is to supply drinking water. Tube wells will take time. What will happen immediately within 15 days or 20 days? Government should immediately requisition as many jeeps and lorries as they can so that they may supply drinking water immediately to these areas where the scarcity is more.

MR. CHAIRMAN Please conclude. Your time is exhausted. You have been given 20 minutes out of 2 hours for this discussion.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA I am concluding. This should be done immediately. We may tackle the immediate problem by doing this. In Barabazar area the tube wells are going into the black-market. Some effective measures should be taken up so that tube-well apparatus do not go underground. Test relief work should not be done haphazardly, it should be properly coordinated, with the local developmental works.

MR. CHAIRMAN You can send all your suggestions to the Minister.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA We don't get the time. Only a few minutes more, Sir.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour). It was my motion, but because of some peculiar rule, I have been made No. 2 in the list.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA I want to warn Government that unless advance preparations are made to protect the *aman* crop

in the next season, the whole economy of rural West Bengal will be shattered. The immediate requirement is that there should be remission of land revenue, at least suspension, if not remission of the agricultural loans and fertiliser loans, there should also be advance preparations as regards seeds distribution and also the giving of fertiliser and other loans to the cultivators.

As regards jute about Rs. 44 crores worth of jute is lost and therefore, the price of jute will shoot up. It is time that the jute growers and cultivators should get a fair price for their produce and should have a proper share in this rise in price.

As regards distribution of food, gratuitous relief should be given to the people of the drought-affected areas in large number. Grains should be opened in larger numbers, and their management should be entrusted to non-official organisations like the Marwari Relief Society, the Ramakrishna Mission etc. Large scale fair price shops should be opened in all drought-affected areas and cheap canteens should also be opened, and voluntary organisations should be invited to provide milk to the children and also distribute 'Bulgar' food to them.

I conclude with the observation with which I started, namely that West Bengal should be declared as a drought area and the whole problem should be tackled not in any partisan spirit, but I would again urge that committees should be formed at all levels from the State level to the block level consisting of members from all parties so that the problem could be tackled by the people as a whole and not in any partisan way.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI (Calcutta South). Really speaking, the situation in West Bengal as a result of the recent drought is a very painful one. Immediately after the elections on 11th March, 1972, a progressive democratic Government under the leadership of the Congress Party was installed in West Bengal. That Govt. started reopening the closed industries, re-employing more than 50,000 members of the working classes, restoring peace in the educational campus, in the industrial belt and in the agricultural field, re-thinking a

new plan for West Bengal to revitalise West Bengal and make it Bengal of gold. Unfortunately in this hour we are facing a new crisis the crisis of drought.

Just a little while ago, Shri Samar Guha was explaining the drought, situation in West Bengal. If only he had taken the risk of losing his allowances in Parliament for ten days and visited these places he could have placed before you a better picture of the drought situation in West Bengal.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA I had been there.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI This drought has not been caused by the political parties or at the motivation of the Government but is one due to natural causes. When the Prime Minister Shri Mata Indira Gandhi paid a visit to Calcutta in connection with some other office she curtailed two or three of her important engagements and rushed to Bankura and Midnapur and she assured the Government as also the people of West Bengal that all assistance would be given to them to fight the drought. The Ministers of the West Bengal Government right from Cabinet rank to other ranks are marching into the districts taking as their chief commands of the districts in order to rely to the Government the actual requirements. You will be glad to know that there is no question of political parties here. The common people and even the students in the colleges and universities are all co-operating with Government in the programme for installation of tube wells or digging of tube wells and digging of ponds and reconstruction of ponds here and there. But the crisis is so acute that immediate relief cannot come immediately.

But we have every confidence that we shall be able to succeed in meeting this crisis. We need some financial assistance, for the purpose and we are quite confident and hopeful that the Central Government would assist us as much as they could. It has been stated in the press that about Rs 40 crores would be needed for the purpose. I personally feel that it will be much more than that. The problem which we are seeing in West Bengal now is that

the money earmarked for other developmental works is being spent on fighting the drought. So the actual assistance for agricultural development should be given from the Centre so that immediately after relief work in the drought areas is over, we can devote our energies to the scheduled programme of agricultural development in rural areas.

Prof Guha repeatedly said that all the political parties were not invited. This is not correct. The Chief Minister had invited all the people, particularly the major parties. Prof Guha is a learned man and I respect him as my teacher. He was also invited by the Chief Minister as a citizen but we cannot invite him as a party man because he has no party in Bengal.

SHRI PILOO MODY (Godhra) These days one-man parties are enough.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI I would like to give attention to the condition of the poor peasants. In Bankura, Purba and Birbhum I have seen with my own eyes during personal visits the distressed condition of the peasants. Poor boys from peasant families have been rushing to the cities to bring water. We will be happy to know that some six or seven days before city boys from Calcutta, Behampur, Katganj and Sagar have been voluntarily co-operating in taking water by lorries for supply to the distress areas.

Immediately after relief work is over, two or three specific things have to be done. First free fertiliser and free seeds required by the poor peasants should be supplied to them. This cannot be done by the State Government alone. Central assistance is needed in this respect. Then the poor peasants in the drought-affected areas should be given free medical assistance. This is a State subject, but the Central Government should provide the financial wherewithal for giving this assistance. For the Bangladesh refugees, the Central Government had purchased so many things in Tripura, Bengal and Assam like tents, tubewells etc. Immediately, it should be ascertained how much of it was lost and how much is an our possession. Whatever

[Shri Priya Ranjan Das Munsi]

materials are available should be diverted for the relief of drought-stricken people so that this may be an additional relief to them.

I do not like to dwell more on this subject. It is unfortunate that drought has seriously affected the people. Otherwise, Bengal was marching progressively in all fields. The Rural Water supply Minister, Shri Sattar, himself had promised to provide within a month tubewells and other things to ensure a rural water supply scheme. But as Prof. Guha might have told you, in certain parts the bureaucratic red-tape is delaying work. Now Ministers have been deployed there. We must also remember that for the last four years Bengal administration and some officials were under the pressure of a certain rule. They are not able to break themselves free from the old tradition. So it is the duty of all progressive parties to join to other and participate in this endeavour to put more pressure on the administration, gear up the machinery so that they ultimately do their duty by the people in dire need.

With these words, I hope that the relief measures undertaken will succeed in alleviating the distress. The Centre has assured us help. I do not like to put more pressure on them. The Prime Minister herself has promised in clear terms that whatever help needed by the State Government would be given to mitigate the distress of the people.

Because I have seen with my own eyes the situation in Bankura and Midnapore. I think Prof. Guha should have congratulated the Prime Minister in his speech, because in spite of her preoccupation, she had to curtail many things and she personally paid attention and talked to the Chief Minister at night. She called on the Chief Minister and the Ministers of the Cabinet and certain other people also do discuss how we can fight the issue. I am quite confident that immediately when the Parliament session is over on the 31st of this month, we shall find in the newspapers that effective drought measures have been

taken up vigorously by the Government and that the drought situation is met like a challenge of war.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE (Rajapur): Sir, one clarification from the hon. Member. I do not want to speak. He said that nobody was invited to that Committee, from the Socialist Party, because the Socialist Party does not exist in West Bengal. I want to know from him if in Goa there was any calamity, and an all-party committee was to be formed, because from Goa proper not a single legislator has been elected from the Congress Party would he like the Congress Party to be excluded from such a Committee?

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI: I was not mentioning it in that light. But Prof. Guha was telling us very clearly that he was always invited. Unfortunately, Mr. Dandavate has got no followers in West Bengal, absolutely. He should encourage Mr. Guha to raise his party in West Bengal. What can Mr. Dandavate do there? (*Interruptions*).

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): Sir, I have heard with rapt attention the dialogue of a mutual admiration society here. One called the other a great man. Let us forget about it for the time being.

I come to the subject. The magnitude of the miseries that are prevalent in West Bengal now is astounding. I quote from a Calcutta paper which says that there has been a loss of the Aus crop to the tune of about three lakh tonnes and worth about Rs. 36 crores; jute, about 1.5 million bales worth about Rs. 30 crores, and standing Baro crop, about 1,08,000 tonnes worth about Rs. 15 crores. The Baro variety is cultivated in a total area of about 1,45,000 acres.

Out of the population of a little over four crores in West Bengal, to our mind, about a crore and a half, that is, more than a third of the total population are vitally affected, and the traditional areas of Bankura, Purulia, Midnapore, Malda and

Birbhum are the worst affected. Last year they were the worst affected from floods. This year, they are the sufferers from drought.

There had been numerous starvation deaths; in Midnapore alone, six died of starvation. That has come out in all the papers. In a place in Midnapore, in Uttarbhil, a muslim family died of starvation, and how pathetic is the narration of the people of the Uttarbhil village, most of whom are agricultural labourers, when they talked about Gulame Katurm Saifuddin who had seven children? As long as they could, they fed Gulame and her seven children. Last year, there was a storm which demolished their hovel, and the local young men, although most of them were unemployed, gave her shelter and food. It was a different story this year. On one Sunday in April, there was no food, and these seven children found their mother dead in the morning. How pathetic it is?

It has all happened due to lack of rainfall. I agree. It is Nature. But during the last 25 years, the Congress has held power at the Centre, controlling all the fiscal and developmental measures, and for the last 25 years in West Bengal also—25 years minus 22 months—the Congress has held power. Let us see, however, what they have been able to do. The share of West Bengal in the rural works programme is as follows. This is in reply to a question of mine—4454, of 1st May, 1972, which says—outlay sanctioned for 1970-71, 1971-72 assistance, disbursement actual expenditure, etc, Andhra Pradesh, Rs. 2.84 crores; Gujarat, Rs. 3.30 crores; Maharashtra, Rs. 1.32 crores; Mysore, Rs. 1.81 crores; Rajasthan, Rs. 2.22 crores. For West Bengal the figure is Rs. 0.34 crores wonderful, it tops the list. Now, I come to the actual expenditure. Andhra Pradesh Rs. 3.90 crores, Maharashtra Rs. 4.23 crores (total for a few years) and West Bengal, Rs. 0.10 crores. Take another issue the agricultural refinance corporation, whose job it is to encourage minor irrigation to fight drought, water scarcity or scarcity for drinking water. Let us see the wonderful performance of the two Governments functioning together. The statement here shows the total number of schemes, total financial

assistance and the total commitment of the corporation, and the number of schemes fully implemented. The figure for Andhra is 74, for Gujarat 39, for Haryana 17, for Maharashtra 38, for Mysore 85, for Punjab 29 and for West Bengal 06. This is what you have been able to do in 25 years and yet they are waxing eloquent.

17 hrs.

SHRI M. RAM GOPAL REDDY (Nizamabad) : Hear, hear.

MR. CHAIRMAN : None should say 'hear hear' in this House.

SHRI M. RAM GOPAL REDDY : Sorry Sir.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : Mr. Reddy is a good man in bad company.

SHRI PILOO MODY : What is wrong in it? Prof. Ranga did it 20 times a day and I follow my leader, not yours.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (Gwalior) : What about 'shame, shame' then?

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : I come to small irrigation projects. Here is a statement showing additional area benefited by minor irrigation works in lakh hectares during 1968-69 to 1970-71. I shall give one or two figures: for Bihar, 3.25; for Gujarat 2.36, for Maharashtra 3.44 that is your State, for Punjab 3.09 for U.P. 14.43 and for West Bengal 1.53. Again, it tops the list. This is what you have been able to do in 25 years.

I shall now quote from the report of the national water supply and sanitation schemes. It says :

"The environmental hygienic committee estimated that roughly 606 per cent of the urban towns in India had water supplies which served 615 per cent of the total population or 48.5 per cent of

[Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu]

the urban population Supplies were designed to give two to forty gallons of water per head per day. In all 23 cities and 12 other towns were partially served. Although a decade has passed, those conditions do not seem to have changed significantly". That is the position and still you are waxing eloquent

I come to the annual plan. Mr. Subramaniam is here and I am very fortunate that he would hear these things and try to see himself in front of a mirror. It says "despite increasing attention paid by the State and Central Governments, greater effort is necessary. It is estimated that out of a total of 5.67 lakhs of villages do not lose sight of the figure of the problem. It gets "90656 villages have scarcity of drinking water, they have no assured sources of drinking water within a distance of one mile or fifty feet below ground level. 43,467 villages lie in Chhota Nagpur area, 3,184 villages are in guinea worm infested area, 24,778 villages with other health problems due to excessive chloride and salinity. They have miserably failed, they have miserably neglected and they have created more regional imbalances in the matter of growth in the rural areas than anybody else could have possibly done.

I want to say one more thing. The development of irrigation potential and its utilisation. From 1950-51 to 1968-69 the ultimate potential created and utilisation of potential created in regard to surface water, major, medium and minor is 60, 45 and 15. The ground water now is 72. The tapping had been far below, of what they could have done. I only want to say that the drought that is taking a heavy toll in West Bengal in terms of life and property and the peoples' living conditions is not really man-made. But the man could have easily prevented it, had he been serious about it during the last 25 years and tried to bluff the country. I want to say that now they should go through the process of purification; they should come forward with a heavy hand in the sense that they should come out liberally and they should do remission of land revenue. Free ration should be provided and all other relief measures should be taken and after all

this performance of West Bengal in the matter of rural growth, rural water supply, rural irrigation, the State should be declared as a backward State and all the benefits that are due to a backward State should be given to West Bengal. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Subodh Hansda

SHRI SUBODH HANSDA (Midnapore)
Mr. Chairman, Sir, while opening the debate, Shri Samar Guha has given a very eloquent speech and has accused the Government of West Bengal for not taking proper care regarding the drought conditions. But he should know that the Government of West Bengal has already taken care of the situation and they have completely exhausted the budget and have asked the Government of India for nearly Rs. 4 crores and I think he should take note of this and I think he is not the only public representative of this House who has taken care of this situation, but there are other Members also who have already taken notice of this and they have asked the Government to take proper care of the situation.

Sir, this drought is undoubtedly an unprecedented drought and this has affected the large areas, particularly, border areas of West Bengal, i.e., near the Chhota Nagpur Plateau. I had been to these places and I have seen all tanks and ponds have dried up. The tubewells and the wells that have been sunk, have also dried up and the people are running from one place to another to get a bucket of water. People have to run two or three miles to get water for drinking purposes. It is a very serious situation that has arisen and I think the Government have taken notice of this and the Government have ordered to sink tube-wells in all these areas.

This problem is very acute in the Tribal areas. As you know most of the Tribal villages are scattered villages and 60% of the villages are only covered by tubewells and wells and the remaining 30 to 40% are not yet to be covered by this programme. All

these people are very badly affected and I think the Government will take care of these villages and special machinery should be set-up for this purpose to see that they could be provided with tubewells or drinking water facilities

Sir, of course, Government have tried its best to provide them with the drinking water facilities, but with the limited funds they have not been able to complete the whole scheme. In that respect, I would request the Centre to come forward so that the Government of West Bengal can dig wells and put up more tubewells in those villages. On the one side, people are not getting drinking water, on the other side, cattle wealth in thousands are facing starvation and they are not getting pond water to drink. Most of the fields are dried up, except for one or two green fields here and there. The reports are that if there is no rain, a very serious situation will develop.

West Bengal entered into the green revolution a few years ago and the area of cultivation has been doubled this year. But unfortunately due to drought, most of the paddy has dried up. All standing crops are now dried up. We have lost the most important paddy—the *boro* paddy. We have also lost the *jute* crop and the *aus* paddy. By this process, West Bengal is losing nearly Rs 80 crores. Last year we had very heavy floods. This year we are having drought. These two things have created a very serious situation. Prices are going up. Rice was selling at Re 1 last month; now it has gone up by 50 per cent. If we are to tackle the situation and save people from starvation, Government should open cheap ration shops throughout the State. In ration shops, there is a classification—A Class, B Class, C Class, and D Class. In these circumstances, I do not think there should be any classification for distribution of rations. There are very limited number of ration shops in the whole State. I request that more ration shops should be opened

and all the people in the entire State should be covered.

Apart from loss of crops, in the mofussil areas, people have no work and they have started starving. Government is trying to give some help through T.R. schemes, but the Government funds are already exhausted. The Prime Minister made a dash to Midnapore, Purulia and Bankura and she has seen with her own eyes how people are eating herb *sal seeds and mohua* flowers. This is a serious situation. Unless Government comes forward to create jobs or open some relief works, 60 per cent of the total population might go on starvation.

17 14 hrs

[SHRI K. N. TIWARY *in the Chair*]

The situation is very serious and Government should take it very seriously. The West Bengal Government has deputed its ministers to all the districts to look after the works taken up by the Government. It has been calculated that to save West Bengal from this situation, West Bengal requires more than Rs 40 crores. I am sure the Central Government will comply with this request and give more money for taking up development works. In such a situation, the Government has taken up a number of T.R. schemes, but all these schemes have not had any far-reaching effect. Schemes like irrigation, roads, deep tube wells, etc. which have a far-reaching effect should be taken up there. I hope the Government will think over this matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: How much time does the Minister like to have?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ANNASAHEB P SHINDE) · Twenty minutes.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Alipore)
Mr Chairman, this drought is yet another major calamity which has afflicted this unfortunate State of West Bengal. I do not wish to go into the detailed description of the misery of the people in the affected districts—there are plenty of accounts appearing every day in the daily press—but it is certainly an ironical thing that many of the areas in my State, which were claiming to be centres of the Green Revolution, have been turned by this drought into barren red soil. And this only proves once again, if I may say so with all respect and all deference, to scientists, technologists, agricultural experts and Ministers, this does reveal once again how precarious still is the base of this Green Revolution and how far we are still dependent on the vagaries of the monsoon and on the weather God. Some of these districts themselves were making good-progress obviously under the techniques of the Green Revolution. But if one goes through and sees what is happening there, the economy is shattered and there is the greatest ruin in at least six districts of that State. The accounts which have appeared in the press are harrowing and I do not wish to dwell on them much.

The scarcity of drinking water is not something which is new in the villages. It not only a question of remote rural areas. I hope the Minister is aware of the fact that there are village areas within 8 or 10 miles of Calcutta city where village women have to walk six miles from their homes to fetch drinking water. During the recent elections I have seen in one area, which falls within the area which is called the industrial suburb of greater Calcutta, where there are some villages on the fringes, that women have to walk every day four or five miles from their homes to get drinking water. This is the condition so near such a big metropolis that is the degree of neglect which has been there for years together, I am not blaming any party; there is no point in it now. I am would say that the city dwellers like me and

you are responsible for it, in the long run, all our energies and our attention and everything has been given mainly to improving the lot of city people. But I think it is a shame that within six miles of Calcutta city women have to walk five miles to fetch drinking water. Neither the Congress Government, nor the UF Government nor any other government has been able to solve this problem.

The conditions in these half a dozen districts are infinitely worse. There are pictures published in the press which you may have seen. In Purulia district in the railway junction where water is stored for the exclusive use of the locomotive engine boilers, that water is being carried away by the people in pots on their heads, because there is no other water available anywhere, and this has led to some sort of fracas also between the loco staff and the public. The staff say 'this water is meant for the engine' and the people say "where are we to collect water if we do not take this water". This is going on every day.

Now it is said that 17,000 tubewells are out of order. These 17,000 tubewells have not gone out of order overnight. That is commonsense. Here also when we have good rainfall, when there is sufficient natural water supply, nobody bothers to check up and see what is the condition of these tubewells. Now, when an acute drought condition has come, it is suddenly discovered that 17,000 tubewells are not in working order. If I may say so, the tubewells racket, if I may call it a racket, has become quite a big scandal in the rural countryside of West Bengal. Many people are involved in this, including contractors, who are known to use sub standard material including rusty old pipes in the construction of these tubewells and they have not been sunk to the minimum depth required to get water. Now it is found that most of these tubewells which are out of order just were not sunk deep enough and so they could not reach the water level. We talk a lot about bureaucracy. I was in Calcutta the other day. I was horrified to hear that the rules and regulations of the Government is such that, unless the Sub-Assistant Engineer gives his sanction and certifies, no tubewell can be sunk anywhere. Some material is being sent

to the distressed areas. Some transport is being commandeered and some drilling rigs and some machinery are being sent. I was told that in places like Midnapore and Bankura, this material is lying at site. It is not being used because the Sub-Assistant Engineer's sanction is not forthcoming or the man is not available. There are not enough people of this category. This is a strange thing. This is a small matter, but it is holding up even the construction of new tube wells. The mere fact I do not know how Mr. Piloo Mody is familiar with these areas—that so many Ministers are running round, while it is certainly welcome I think, it is also a sad commentary on the state of the actual administration. It should not require it. For sinking of tube wells, it should not be necessary that all the Ministers and Deputy Ministers should go running round in the districts. One of the reasons is that the basic administrative apparatus and the procedures are really not at all commensurate to tackle this kind of situation.

Here, there is a report in a Calcutta newspaper which says as follows. I will just quote a few lines. This is from the *Hindustan Standard* of yesterday.

"Human misery has been aggravated by the wanton negligence of the Rural Water supply division of the Public Health Engineering Department entrusted with the job of sinking wells. Most of the wells are without water as they were far short of the requisite depth. MLAs in some areas of Bankura district have even complained that the local people had been hood-winked by the Department and most of the wells were crumbling down."

"When material is being collected to be sent to these areas for digging of new tube wells, cement is extremely in short supply".

Cement, of course, might have been commandeered by some of Mr. Piloo Mody's friends, perhaps.

SHRI PILOO MODY : We have no friends in Calcutta. They are only your friends.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : Trucks are not available. I would like to know what has happened to all the trucks both indigenous and foreign, which were brought here a few months ago and mobilised in Calcutta and round-about at the time of transporting the Bangla Desh refugees and relief supplies for the refugee camps. I do not know where all these trucks have gone. Obviously, they cannot be used for purposes of Bangla Desh refugees. Why cannot they be commandeered? "Some people" this is what the paper goes on to say, "in the South Eastern Railways are making capital out of this human tragedy demanding Rs. 400 for the sanction of a wagon carrying cement to the scarcity areas".

I am just mentioning these points because this has to be looked into. After all, Railways is a central subject and whatever decisions are taken either here or by the Government of West Bengal, the point is that whether the implementation will be carried out properly or not? Whether this bureaucracy and these bureaucratic officials and procedures are not going to act as an impediment to the relief work to be carried out on a war footing. This is the phrase which is being used often that everything should be done on a war footing.

I just want to make a few suggestions. The extent of gratuitous relief, that has been announced so far, is estimated to be of the extent of 2.5 per cent. This we consider to be hopelessly inadequate and the level should be raised to cover at least 10 per cent of the people who are affected. I think, this I should say in all honesty that when similar drought conditions had overtaken some districts, three or four years ago, when the U. F. Ministry was in power, it is a fact that they have sanctioned an adequate level of relief to cover 10 per cent. But just now, upto the present, the State Government has only sanctioned 2.5 per cent. Perhaps, it is because they are waiting to get more assurances from the Centre on the quantum of assistance that will be forthcoming. I do not know

Now that a Central team has probably already gone there to make an on-the-spot assessment.—I do not know whether it has already gone or is proposing to go—in any

[Shri Indrajit Gupta]

case I hope the Central Government will not be at all hesitant or miserly in coming forward with its assistance and will not use its formula about matching grant. The State has got very slender resources. A State which is being faced in successive years with floods and Bangladesh crisis and now with drought may not be able to form its own resources to raise a very large amount of funds for this purpose. If that is to be used as a yardstick for matching grant the total amount that becomes available may be absolutely inadequate to cope up with the crisis. I hope the Central Government will rise above red-tapism of procedures and really come forward to give generous assistance on the scale on which it is required and estimated by the State Government.

Other hon. Members have already said that it should be declared a drought area. That, I think, is essential. The army is already being used on a limited scale to provide transport and to transport materials to certain areas. If necessary it will have to be done on a bigger scale if other transport is not available.

Of course, the resumption of land revenue and so on and coordinating the relief work in such a way that it is not meant only for a short term purpose but can be dovetailed into a long term scheme of irrigation and so on should be taken up.

What I mean is that though it is the primary responsibility of the State Government, the Central Government must be interested to see that whatever money is provided is used to the most advantageous purpose and is invested in such a way that it will not only be put to the best purpose but will also help long-term needs. Therefore, I suggest that there should be some sort of a joint team of Central Government and State Government representatives which will work the whole thing out on an emergency basis and carry it out on a war footing.

We were told the other day, here, that a cell of the Home Ministry which is located in West Bengal is not meant only for purposes of doing police duties but that, actually, it combines in itself all the functions which may be necessary for the development and stability of West Bengal. If that is so, at this moment, when there is such a

dire crisis in the State, that cell of the Home Ministry can also be mobilised for this purpose so that you are kept properly informed and you can be in a position to assist the situation very quickly and without any delay in giving generous assistance on the scale on which it is required.

Finally, I would only once again make a plea that although the administration there belongs to the State Government, the Centre will please try to at least supervise and impress upon them that this kind of administrative structure, when some sub Assistant Engineer, becomes the deciding factor, is not there. I find, in one place, a suggestion has been made to the Government that more sub Assistant Engineers should be recruited. According to the rules, without his sanction, no tubewell can be sunk anywhere. So, something must be done.

Then, there are serious allegations made in the press about the behaviour of certain railway officials or about the Rural Water Supply Division of the Public Health Engineering Department and these should be looked into and stern steps should be taken to see that no bureaucratic red-tape stands in the way of bringing succour to the suffering people of West Bengal.

*SHRI S N SINGH DEO (Bankura)

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am thankful to you for the opportunity you have given to me to speak on drought situation that is prevailing in the State of West Bengal. The State of West Bengal is passing through a dreadful situation and the people there are experiencing a lot of hardship for the drought conditions. It is not possible for the State Government to tackle the situation all by themselves and it can only be done if the Central Government comes forward to give adequate assistance to the State in the matter. I would therefore request the Government through you, Sir, that the team of experts which the Government is contemplating to send to the State should be sent at an early date and the Government should also ensure that relief and other assistance made available to the State Government for this purpose is adequate to meet the situation and all these things reach the State in time.

*The original speech was delivered in Bengali.

Many hon. Members have already spoken about the drought situation in West Bengal in general and therefore I would like to say something particularly about the situation prevailing in Purulia, Bankura and Midnapore districts and the sad plight of the people there. Sir, the entire region is suffering from water scarcity. The ponds, well etc., have all dried up and people have to trek miles after miles to fetch water. The water level has gone down and even when fresh wells are dug water is not available and the sufferings of the people have aggravated immensely for want of drinking water. The cultivators too have suffered a lot for want of water. The standing crop particularly the Boropaldy has dried up in the field, Jute and other crops have met with similar fate. Sir, the time at my disposal being very limited, I would not be able to dilate on the plights of the people further. The Government have undertaken test relief and gratuitous relief work and they have also undertaken other measures to deal with the situation but I think that it is not adequate. The hon. Prime Minister has personally visited Purulia, Bankura and Midnapore districts and she has seen for herself the plight of the people and heard from them their agonies and grievances. The time being very short, I would like to make some suggestions through you, Sir. The three districts of Purulia, Bankura and Midnapur have a number of small rivers and rivulets and if bunds are constructed over these rivers, then we can have reservoirs there which can supply water to all the three districts both for the purpose of drinking as also for cultivation throughout the whole year. Secondly we have to augment the supply of electricity to these rural areas and once the electricity is available, we would be able to divert water from one place to another according to the needs of the different regions and also it would help improve the State of agriculture of these regions. Thirdly the people of these regions are very poor and therefore, I would urge upon the Government to set up small, medium and large scale industries in Purulia, Bankura and Midnapur so that it may offer some permanent source of employment to the people and with these words, Sir, I conclude my speech.

SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY
(Cooch-Behar) : Hon. Members have illus-

trated their viewpoints regarding the drought situation in West Bengal. But, before I say a few words, I would like to say the mover of the resolution explained the drought situation in West Bengal in a fashion to suit his political ends than to give the real benefits to the affected and the drought-stricken people of West Bengal. He has gone so far even to criticise the present West Bengal Government, a Government which has been taking so much of trouble for the last few weeks to go round the country side and to see to what extent the help could be given to these drought-stricken people. *(Interruptions)* well, you should have read the paper properly. Even when the Ministers are taking their responsibilities, shouldering their responsibilities and sitting just at their desks at the dead of night taking decisions and instructing the officials to carry out the measures, they are criticised. Sir this is not the occasion to criticise. This is the occasion to see as to how we will be in a position to minimise this human misery.

Before I go to make any other suggestions and to put it to the Government on that line firstly, I would request the Government to have a proper inquiry into the causes of this drought and why? Like wise in a rotational manner, why we get this drought situation from time to time? It has been well expressed in the news paper that few years ago there was a similar situation. Sometimes drought and sometimes floods and in a rotational manner we people become effected almost each and every year. Sometimes it is political pressure and sometimes it is political interference and sometimes by social interference and sometimes by natural interference. So it is indeed a fact that this situation has been taking place as a matter of rotation only because we have not taken in the past so much of care as how to avert such situations. It has, already been stated in the various papers that the prime reasons for this major drought situation in West Bengal are that the hydrological science has not been consulted, and hydrological science has not been given any quarter.

Now, the Central Government has already instructed the State Government to have a sort of hybrid paddy cultivation and the hon. Minister expressed his hope that

[Shri B K Das Chowdhury]

the rate at which it has been progressing in the matter of this hybrid variety of paddy cultivation in the near future West Bengal will become a surplus State in respect of paddy and rice

It has been stated by certain scientists, those who are working in this line and growing these crops that these hybrid varieties of paddy that are being sown in West Bengal require huge amount of underground water and that has been stated as one of the reasons for this drought. If it is really so if on a proper inquiry you come to this conclusion that this is one of the reasons as to why we find that even in a standard depth well we do not have this water and in a tube well of a standard depth of 200 or 300 water is not available, then it means the underground water seems to have receded far and far below. Sir, I would request the Government to consider that aspect also and see if it is a fact that only because West Bengal is just trying to have the variety of hybrid cultivation in respect of paddy and wheat that this underground water level has been going down and down in course of time

In the matter of drought situation, almost all the Districts of West Bengal, have been affected. No doubt, in West Bengal we have enough water. But what do we find? In one portion we find there is drought condition and in another portion we find flood. Even in one district there is drought and flood condition, for example, in Cochin Behar District one particular Sub-Division Makhliganj is badly affected as badly as Midnapore, Purulia, Bankura, Nadia and other Districts. In some other Districts of North Bengal also, though we have reports that there had been some showers and showers to such an extent that it rained incessantly for 2-3 days together. Even then we have noticed in the press statement that in certain areas is a drought condition. I would urge upon this Government to consider this matter, what really are the reasons for this drought. If we feel some alacrity we can certainly do it, but if we feel ourselves that we have nothing to do only because it is a natural problem, we will not be able to solve the problem. Today, with the help of the technological advance and the scientific development, we are in a position to control such natural

phenomenon to our benefit as far as possible

In the matter of relief I would urge this Government to see to what extent this relief can be given to the State Government. Not only relief should be given. It should be declared on a war footing. The State Government machinery must be given all assistance and if necessary some of the officials and engineers of the Centre may go and help the State machinery to ensure that all relief works taken thereby get implemented as early as possible.

Last point, Sir, Because of this drought, no doubt there is a huge loss which has not yet been accounted for, may be Rs 80 crores or Rs 100 crores or Rs 150 crores. And the poor people, the people in the country side the rural people, those who depend upon agricultural production, for one season have been completely dried up and nothing is left in their hands. I want to know whether these people will be given fertilisers, whether these people will be given improved seeds, free of cost, so that in the coming season they may have some form of benefit to cultivate their products and manage their own affairs.

With these words, Sir, I request once again that the Centre should think it very seriously and take up all measures to see that all those measures are implemented as early as possible. Thank you.

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI (Bhubaneswar) I am one with the friends from West Bengal who have spoken about the present drought situation there and the sufferings of the people and I support the demand that our friends have made to meet the present difficult situation in West Bengal. Midnapore is in the border of our State. The sufferings of the people are well-known. There are various suggestions that hon. Members have made before the hon. Minister that the Government should provide immediate gratuitous relief and take steps for sinking of tube wells and provide drinking water to these villages. These are, I hope, immediate measures which can be taken in hand at once. I am happy that the West Bengal Government has taken up this problem now very seriously and they have invited the attention of the Prime

Minister and the Government of India to the need for quick and immediate relief, to give as much help as possible to meet the unprecedented crisis. There is also the same difficult situation in Orissa.

The hon. Minister has made a statement about 3 or 4 days ago in this House about drought conditions in West Bengal, Orissa, Rajasthan and part of Bihar. Millions of people are suffering like this. In Orissa for the last 8 months there is no rain. There is the Khurda Notified Area Council, where there is a population of 10,000 and for the last 15 days there is no water at all. All the sources of water in the villages of Orissa have dried up; even water flowing in the river has dried up. Even tanks have dried up. There is no rain for all these days. It is a terrible problem. In the Khurda Notified Area, the wells have dried up. There is no piped water supply arrangements. At least four to five tankers could have been made available for bringing drinking water from other places and supplying to the people. Due to this scarcity of water about 7 to 8 people have now died there because of gastroenteritis and other reasons and this is a very serious problem. Wherever drought conditions prevail, the minimum you should do, is that you should provide immediate drinking water to the people affected. This is something about which the Government should really get worried and do something about it; I can go a little further and say that the Govt. should be ashamed of it. After all these years, after so many schemes and so much of investment that we have made we have been able to supply even drinking water to millions of people, with the result that they do not have even drinking water if the rain fails. I think that this is a very serious matter.

The Government of India are sending a team to West Bengal. So far as Orissa is concerned, I think that the second team which went there visited only the cyclone-affected areas. So far as the drought-affected areas of Orissa are concerned, the State Government has already written to the Centre to send a team, and I think that the same team which visits West Bengal could also visit Orissa and see these drought-affected areas where the people do not get any water to drink and where the villagers are without

any work because there is no rain and the agricultural operations cannot start.

This is the position in the area bordering Midnapur and also the Puri district, and in fact all over the State the same situation is prevailing. First, there were floods, then there was cyclone and then there was drought. It is really a chronic disease which is afflicting the State.

I would submit that this requires a co-ordinated effort from on the Planning Commission, the Minister of Agriculture and the other Ministers concerned. In spite of the planning that we are doing in the Irrigation Ministry and the planning in the Agriculture Ministry and in the Planning Commission for the last twenty-five years, how is it only 15 to 20 per cent of the population has been touched so far as drinking water supply and irrigation are concerned? Why should there not be a co-ordinated effort in order to find out how much money is required to be invested so that at least in the next two or three years, we shall have solved this problem of drinking water supply in all the villages. Out of five lakh villages, I am told that there are still about 96,000 villages which are without drinking water supply. What efforts are being made to provide the people in those villages with drinking water? Rs. 20 to 30 crores should be invested here and now for this purpose. Since the Planning Minister is here, I would like to ask why this should not be taken up as a challenge so that in the next two or three years we shall have solved this first and rudimentary problem. Let us not talk of socialism and other things, but let us resolve to provide drinking water to these 96,000 villages which are at present devoid of it.

It is a very serious situation which we are facing. I congratulate my hon. friends from West Bengal who have raised this discussion and brought to the notice of the House the sufferings of the people of West Bengal on account of drought as also the sufferings of the people of the other drought-affected States. I hope the Planning Minister, the Minister of Food and Agriculture will try to see and find a way out to solve this immediate problem before the country.

SHRI SHYAM SUNDER MOHAPATRA (Balasore) : I come from the border area of west Bengal and Orissa and I know the sad plight of the people of Midnapur district. It is a matter of great regret that after so many years of DVC, we are still seeing the suffering of the people of the Burdwan district. When Mr. Voordvin, the American engineer planned the DVC, he thought that by the right bank main canal which came from the Durgapur barrage, atleast 10 lakhs acres of land would be irrigated and for all times to come, flood and drought would no more be a menace to the people of Burdwan. It is unfortunate that in 1972 the people of Burdwan are still in distress.

While speaking about Midnapur, and about the North Balasore area adjoining Midnapur, I would like to bring to the notice of the Planning Minister who is fortunately here that there was a plan for having a multipurpose project over the Subarnarekha river. Dr. K. L. Rao thought that there might be a DVC like plan as far as this river was concerned, so that we could have dams, reservoirs and canals which would irrigate lands and for a long time to come, the people will no more be under the distress of famine and drought. Unfortunately, if the Government of India do not move forward, this programme will not be included in the Fifth Five Year Plan.

The other day, I was talking to Dr. K. L. Rao and he said that investigation was in progress as far as the Government of Bihar and the Government of Orissa were concerned. If that comes into being, there would be a big reservoir near Midnapur district and there will be canals to irrigate lands not only in Midnapur but also those in North Balasore and probably drought will no more be a nightmare for the people of Midnapur district.

All of us thought that during the Gandhi Jayanti Centenary year, every village in India would have at least drinking water facilities. If at the end of May, 1972, there are villages, thousands of them, in India where the people do not get drinking water and they have to depend upon small ponds, it is a matter of shame not only for us, the Members of Lok Sabha but for all the people outside as well.

To fight the menace of drought or flood, commission after commission has a sat and gone into the matter. They have said that there should be deep tubewells and shallow tubewells sunk and there should be medium type of irrigation works and so on. If Government take up these schemes on a war footing and spend a sizeable chunk of money on them, in a few years with co-ordinated effort between the Central and State Governments, we could have water supply ensured to every village in the country.

Here I wish to bring one thing to notice, to which Shri Indrajit Gupta also referred. The contractors engaged for boring the tubewells do not do their work properly with the result that after a few months or a year, the tubewells go out of order and again the same amount of money has to be spent on them. In this way a few crores of rupees are lost. I would request the Planning Minister and the Agriculture Minister to caution State Governments that they should either do it departmentally or have strict vigilance on the contractors engaged to do this work and the bills should not be paid unless the wells are checked and certified by the engineers.

Today it is not only Bengal which is in distress. The distress of Bengal has focused the attention to the situation in the entire country. There is famine condition in Poona where 2029 villages have been hit. In Orissa, more than 10 million people are drought-affected. In Bihar, which is your area, large tracts of land are drought-stricken. So it is the duty of the Minister concerned to take it up at the national level so that it can be tackled on that basis. This menace should be tackled on a war footing so that it does not descend upon us again all of a sudden. If this is done, during the Fifth Plan period we could have our planning in such a way that flood, cyclone or drought constitute no more a menace to the people of India.

श्री रामरत्न शर्मा (बाँदा) : सभापति महोदय, हमी मेरे मित्र श्री दासचौधरी जी ने इस विषय पर बोलते हुए पश्चिमी बंगाल की राज्य सरकार की तारीफ की कि वह सूखे की स्थिति का मुकाबला करने के लिए काफी दीर्घ-दूर कर

रही है, प्रयत्न कर रही है। वास्तव में राज्य सरकार का जो प्रयास है, उसकी प्रशंसा भी जानी चाहिए। लेकिन क्या यह सही नहीं है कि यह सूखा पहली बार नहीं पड़ा है—चाहे बंगाल हो या देश के अन्य भाग हों, मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि केन्द्र सरकार और राज्य सरकारों ने अभी तक क्या किया ? क्या इस के लिये कोई इन्फेक्टिव, अन्तर्राज्यव्यापी योजना नहीं बनाई जा सकती थी ताकि हम इस तरह के प्राये-दिन के सूखे, अकाल और भुखमरी का सामना किया जा सकता और उसके लिये कोई उचित कदम उठाये जाते। देश में अन्न के भण्डार भरे हुए हैं, लेकिन देश को भ्रादमी भूखे मरें, देश के अन्दर भूख से मृत्यु हो—इस से अधिक शर्म की बात कोई नहीं हो सकती। मैं सरकार से जानना चाहता हूँ कि अभी तक इस तरफ कोई इन्फेक्टिव कदम क्यों नहीं उठाये गये और क्यों ऐसी योजना नहीं बनाई गई—पिछले 25 सालों में देश के अन्दर—ताकि अकाल, भुखमरी और सूखे की बातें न हो।

बंगाल के बारे में बहुत कुछ कहा गया है—मिदनापुर, पुरलिया, वीरभूमि और बांकुड़ा में जो सूखे की स्थिति है, उसके बारे में तमाम माननीय सदस्यों ने काफी बातें कहीं हैं, इस लिये पुनः उनका उल्लेख करके मैं सदन का ज्यादा समय नहीं लेना चाहता, लेकिन मैं यह कहना चाहता हूँ बंगाल के साथ साथ उड़ीसा, बिहार और कुछ उत्तर प्रदेश के भागों से भी सूखे की स्थिति है और वह गम्भीर रूप धारण किये हुए है। उड़ीसा में अभी पहले साइक्लोन आये थे और उसके बाद ड्राउट आ गया। उस में केन्द्र सरकार ने जो मदद की है, जितना रुपया प्रांतीय सरकारों ने मांगा था, उस से बहुत कम मात्रा में मदद केन्द्र सरकार ने दी है। उससे कोई फायदा नहीं पहुंचा है। एक बात मैं कहना चाहूंगा कि ड्राउट, अकाल, इन सब के लिए योजना बनती है, केन्द्र से जो

रुपया दिया जाता है उसका राजनीतिक कारणों से उपयोग नहीं होना चाहिए। केन्द्र को भी देखना चाहिए और राज्य सरकारों को भी ध्यान रखना चाहिए कि जिन क्षेत्रों में अधिक आवश्यकता है वहां पर पहले दिया जाये। राजनीतिक कारणों से उसका दुरुपयोग नहीं दिया जाना चाहिए। उत्तर प्रदेश के कुछ जिलों में, खासकर बुंदेलखंड में बादा जिले में एक पाठा इलाका है उसमें करीब करीब 50 गावों में पीने के पानी की समस्या लगातार सैकड़ों वर्षों से चली आ रही है। उसकी ओर कभी केन्द्रीय सरकार का ध्यान गया था, उन्होंने एक योजना भी बनाई थी लेकिन उसमें कोई कारगर सफलता नहीं मिली। अब भी वहां के लोगो को 5-6 मील दूर पीने के पानी के लिये जाना पड़ता है। इस लू लपट और सूखे के कारण पचासों मृत्युयें हर साल वहा होती है। तो मैं केन्द्र का ध्यान इस ओर दिलाना चाहता हूँ और आग्रह करता हूँ मंत्री जी से कि सम्पूर्ण देश के लिए, कम से कम सूखे, अकाल और भुखमरी से भ्रादमियों की जानें न जायें, इसके लिए अच्छा प्रयत्न करें और कोई योजना इसके लिए बनायें।

श्री नवल किशोर शर्मा (दौसा) : सभापति जी, पश्चिम बंगाल में सूखे की स्थिति भयंकर है। इस संदर्भ में जो विचार पश्चिम बंगाल के बारे में व्यक्त किए गए उनसे मैं सहानुभूति रखता हूँ लेकिन मैं निवेदन करना चाहूंगा कि मेरा अपना राज्य तो इस बीमारी से हमेशा ही पीड़ित रहा है। पिछले सात सालों से राजस्थान में हर वर्ष अकाल पड़ता है और इस वर्ष भी 26 जिलों में से 10 जिलों में अकाल है। राजस्थान के लिए अकाल एक बड़ा भारी बोकसा बन गया है। राजस्थान की सरकार के ऊपर साढ़े छः सौ करोड़ का ऋण है। हालत यह है कि हर साल 14 करोड़ का ब्याज अकेले इस ऋण को चुकाने के लिए चाहिए। राजस्थान राज-नीतिक कारणों से पिछड़ा हुआ प्रांत रहा है

[श्री नवल किशोर]

और भय उस पर अकाल के कारण खर्चों का बोझा और पड़ता है। हमारे देश में असल में कभी सूखे की स्थिति, कभी फ्लड्स की स्थिति और कभी साइक्लोन की स्थिति बनी रहती है और उसके कारण राज्य सरकारों पर बड़ा बोझा पड़ जाता है जोकि राज्य सरकारों के साधनों के बाहर रहता है। यहाँ पर अभी प्लानिंग मिनिस्टर ये बने चले गए लेकिन म. कृषि मन्त्री जी से निवेदन करूँगा कि यह समस्या इस देश की परमानेंट समस्या है और इसका कोई परमार्नेंट हल ढूँढना चाहिये। ऐसे सभी खर्चों के लिए आप देश के स्तर पर एक खास तौर का पब्लिक क्रीजिए और केन्द्र यह अपनी जिम्मेवारी ले कि ऐसे सभी आवश्यक खर्च जो होते हैं उनकी पूर्ति केन्द्र द्वारा की जायेगी। राज्यों के साधन सीमित हैं और राज्यों के साधन सीमित होने की स्थिति में यह बड़ा मुश्किल होता है कि ऐसी दैवी आपदाओं के लिए भी वहाँ की राज्य सरकारें प्रबन्ध करें। मैं निवेदन करना चाहूँगा कि राजस्थान में अकाल के कारण भयंकर स्थिति है। उस इलाके के लोग अपने को नेग्लेक्टड महसूस करते हैं क्योंकि विकास के नाम पर वहाँ कोई खर्च नहीं किया जा सकता। आज राजस्थान की सरकार विद्यालियाँ सरकार बन गई हैं और लोगों में माँग होने लगी है कि राजस्थान का विभाजन होना चाहिये। यह दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण बात है और मैं इसका विरोध करता हूँ। मैं यह निवेदन करूँगा कि आप राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर इसका इलाज कीजिए एक राष्ट्रीय कोष की स्थापना कीजिए और उसके जरिए से, जितने भी खर्च हो चाहे अकाल के, चाहे साइक्लोन के चाहे फ्लड्स के उन को आप बर्दास्त कीजिए। यही मेरा सरकार से निवेदन है।

इस शब्दों के साथ मैं इसका अनुमोदन करता हूँ।

18 hrs

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री (पटना) सभापति जी, माननीय सदस्यों न बंगाल, उड़ीसा और कई दूसरे प्रान्तों में जो अकाल की स्थिति है, या सूखे की स्थिति है उसके बारे में बताया है। मैं बिहार के बारे में एक, दो बातें बताना चाहता हूँ। सभी लोगों को मालूम होगा कि पिछले कई महीनों से यह चर्चा बिहार के अखबारों में और दूसरे प्रान्तों के अखबारों में भी आ रही है कि वहाँ एक लाख से ज्यादा आदिवासी सन्थाल परगना जिले में महीनों से अकाल के शिकार हैं और इस बात को वहाँ के डिप्टी कमिश्नर तक ने स्वीकार किया है, और उन्होंने बहा जाकर निरीक्षण भी किया है। जैसे तो अखबारों में यह बात भी आयी है कि कुछ लोगों की मृत्यु हुई है हालांकि बिहार सरकार ने इसको नहीं माना है। लेकिन मरा भी आजा है कि इस इलाके में अकाल की स्थिति से कुछ मृत्युएँ हुई हैं।

कल 22 तारीख के बिहार के अखबार में पढ़ा उत्तर बिहार के कई जिलों में और दक्षिण बिहार के कई जिलों में अकाल की स्थिति होती जा रही है। और अभी भी लेता है जो गरया घान लगा हुआ है उसको पराबे के लिये न नहर से पानी मिल रहा है, न ट्यूब वेल से पानी मिल रहा है। घान सूख रहा है। तो इस तरह से कई जिलों में स्थिति बड़ी ही गम्भीर है। इस तरफ भी आपका ध्यान जाना चाहिये।

माननीय शर्मा जी ने ठीक ही कहा कि प्राकृतिक आपदा के भोके पर जो दिककते जनता के सामने आयें उसकी जवाबदेही भारत सरकार को तिवानी चाहिये क्योंकि राज्यों की वित्तीय स्थिति अच्छी नहीं होती।

साथ ही मैं यह भी कहना चाहूँगा कि बिहार में अकाल की यह स्थिति जो है ही, बाब के अखबारों में देखा कि संपूर्ण बिहार में 2.34 अरबमी लू से बर बने। कबो ? क्योंकि पानी की कमी है। वर्षा भी नहीं हो रही है, पानी

भी लोगों को पीने को नहीं मिल रहा है। बिहार के तमाम जिलों में आप चले जाइये, देहात में या शहर में सर्वत्र पानी के लिये हा-हाकार है। शहरों के बारे में बार बार कहा गया। पटना, जमशेदपुर, धनबाद, मुजफ्फरपुर, गया, तमाम बड़े-बड़े शहरों में पानी की समुचित व्यवस्था नहीं है। देहातों में पानी की व्यवस्था नहीं है जिसकी वजह से भी लू से लोग मर रहे हैं। तो मैं चाहूंगा कि इस तरफ भी सरकार का ध्यान जाना चाहिये ताकि लोगों को पीने का पानी ठिकाने से मिले और वे अपने प्राणों की रक्षा कर सकें। यह स्थिति बड़े पैमाने पर हमारे सूबे में है। इन दो बातों की तरफ मैं आपका ध्यान खींचना चाहता हूँ, और मुझे उम्मीद है कि बिहार सरकार को आप इन दोनों कामों के लिये ज्यादा से ज्यादा मदद देंगे।

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ANNASAHB P. SHINDE) : I am thankful to you and the hon. Members for raising a discussion on the West Bengal drought situation. Taking advantage of this, naturally, a number of hon. Members have referred to the situation prevailing in Orissa Bihar and Rajasthan. Our country is so vast and it is in the tropical region with agro-climatic conditions and features of the tropical region. From year to year these conditions have repeated in some part of our country and I think we have so much experience now of facing such situations. Despite a number of difficulties, with the co-operation of the State Governments, the Centre does play an important role in providing relief to the affected areas. During the last one year the Central Government provided assistance by way of drought relief and loans to the tune of Rs. 150 crores to meet the requirements of various State Governments. I have no doubt that however serious the situation might be, in co-operation with the West Bengal Government, we shall succeed in providing relief to the suffering people. Naturally when drought conditions develop, human suffering is so much. I myself come from an area

which is drought-prone with a rainfall below 16 to 17" and I know how serious the human suffering is. Large chunks of our population have no means of sustenance except agriculture. So, when there is drought, the first casualty is agriculture and vulnerable sections like landless labour suffer particularly more.

Hon. members know how sincerely Government of India attends to these problems. For instance, all of us know how busy our Prime Minister is. Despite her preoccupations, she took the first opportunity to visit some of these areas. That shows the approach of the Government and our leadership to human suffering in any part of India. Therefore, however difficult the situation may be, I have no doubt that we shall be in a position to find ways and means to fight it.

I must congratulate the West Bengal Government. Some colleagues have been a little harsh. They criticised that the ministers are going here and there. If ministers do not visit the areas, they say, the ministers do not care for the people's sufferings. If the ministers visit those areas, then also they are criticised. This is not fair. I am very glad that the political leadership in West Bengal, particularly the Chief Minister, are so alive to the problems of the people that no sooner the situation developed than they rushed to those areas. They have used the words "war footing". I have no doubt they are very serious. That is why they are taking all measures, to which I shall come a little latter.

West Bengal has been a really unfortunate part of our country. Last year this State suffered from floods. My ministry took up a very large and ambitious programme of summer paddy to see that the suffering is minimised. I am glad this programme has gone so well that as against 4 lakh acres of summer paddy last year, this year, we had almost a programme of 7-1/2 to 8 lakh acres. The State Government has reported that about 1.45 lakh acres of paddy has suffered as a result of this drought. Still it means that 5 to 6 lakh acres of summer paddy will be there, which is substantial as compared to 4 lakh acres last

[Shri Annasaheb P. Shinde]

year. This has been possible because of a number of steps taken by the State Government to provide irrigation facilities, etc.

Mr. Daschowdhury is a very knowledgeable person and he knows the situation there. He asked, is it a fact that high-yielding programme is leading to over-exploitation of underground water resources and is it not likely to cause some serious harm to agricultural economy as a whole? I would like to dispel his fears. Normally in April and May, there is a rainfall of 10 to 12"—pre-monsoon showers—in West Bengal. But this year they practically failed, except some showers in North Bengal and in some other parts. These showers are particularly important in West Bengal for the jute sowing and *ous* paddy cultivation. So, this dry spell has not only created drinking water problem but also affected jute and *ous* paddy cultivation. I apprehend that jute production is likely to be very seriously affected as a result of this. But to conclude from this that exploitation of the underground water resources is likely to create some difficulties because of the high-yielding varieties is not correct. In fact, West Bengal is one one of the region having very rich water wealth. This is really an underground gold mine. In fact, if somebody has to criticise us for some of our failures in the past, it should be for the inadequate exploitation of underground resources of water. Of course, there is always need for regulating the exploitation of underground water resources judiciously. But in Bengal because of recharging of the water on account of the rainfall and Ganges flowing in a particular way, even if the programme is taken up on a very large scale for years to come there will be no shortage. Here I must congratulate the West Bengal Government for having announced that they would like to sink about 12,000 more tubewells as a part of the drought relief programme for the development of agriculture. In fact, a few days earlier when I was in West Bengal I saw some of the summer paddy programmes and I myself suggested that next year the programmes should be extended from 8 lakhs to 15 lakhs acres. Though this is a very ambitious programme, I have no doubt in my mind that with the drive with which the West Bengal Government have started functioning, they will be in a position to put a substantial portion of this programme

into practice and implement them, and this would make a great contribution to the rural economy of West Bengal. I would only plead with Shri Daschowdhury that he need not have any fear about the underground resources of water.

My hon. friend, Shri Jyotirmoy Bose is not here. He always tries to exaggerate matters. He again made a statement of starvation deaths. We have tried to find out information from the State Government. Of course, in this country poverty is rampant and people are under-fed even in normal conditions. So, I am not referring to that aspect of the problem.

SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY : The State Government has denied that.

SHRI ANNASHEB P. SHINDE : Yes, the State Government has categorically denied any starvation deaths. In fact, the condition in the country today is such that starvation death in any part of the country on account of the non-availability of food-grains cannot just happen. In fact, the food position is so comfortable as it has never been in the past.

Hon. Members would be happy to know that we have reached a very record stock position of foodgrains of 9 million tonnes. In fact, the problems are the other way, how to find an outlet for these foodgrains. I have tried to ascertain the position in West Bengal and I find that actually the food which is stored in the godowns is to the tune of almost 5-1/2 lakhs to 6 lakhs tonnes of rice and wheat. Therefore, I do not anticipate any dislocation of supplies of foodgrains.

West Bengal is one of the States where there is an elaborate network of fair price shops and the State Government is reviewing the position from time to time. At present about 15,000 and a few hundred fair price shops are operating in the rural areas. If there is any need to open a few hundred more fair price shops in the rural areas, I have no doubt in my mind that the West Bengal Government will take the necessary steps. I would also like to assure the Chief Minister of West Bengal on the floor of the House that whatever is the require-

ment of foodgrains would be adequately met and there would not be any difficulty, so far as the supply of foodgrains to West Bengal is concerned, or any part of the country for the matter of that.

Shri Indrajit Gupta is not present here. He made a statement about the really precarious base of our agriculture. He stressed how the agricultural economy comes into difficulties because of the drought conditions. As I have said, the jute production is likely to be affected very much the way the sowing programme is going on in West Bengal. At the moment there are 92,000 tubewells, most of which have come recently. The West Bengal Government is trying to have 12,000 more. With this programme, along with the rural electrification which the West Bengal Government wishes to push ahead, I have no doubt in my mind that in the years to come West Bengal will have a very large acreage of summer paddy and jute crop.

Hon. Members from West Bengal will be in a position to understand and appreciate the economy of jute, which is always in difficulties, because whenever there is a failure of rain in April-May, the jute-sowing is adversely affected and violent fluctuations in jute prices takes place. If such a large number of tubewells will come into existence and one or two irrigations are made available for jute sowings, I think this violent fluctuation can be eliminated and some stability in jute production can be achieved. Both my Ministry and the West Bengal Government are proceeding on these lines and I have no doubt in my mind that the West Bengal Agriculture Ministry is doing whatever is necessary and so there will not be any uncertainty in the agricultural economy in the years to come. In the past, the exploitation of the underground water, though the potential was there, was not done adequately. Therefore, the base of agricultural economy in West Bengal was very weak. But as a result of this drought, I think, this is an opportunity for us—it is not a good thing; it is an unfortunate development—and we will use it not only to provide relief but also to see that a very sound basis is provided for the development of agricultural economy for West Bengal.

Then, some hon. Members suggested why not have some permanent programmes for providing relief to drought-prone areas. The hon. Members may be aware that, for the first time, such a programme has been taken over for the country as a whole and, during the Fourth Plan, Rs. 100 crores have been provided to provide employment and to create productive assets, particularly in the drought-prone area so that the necessary protection is available against drought and the failure of rains, etc. For this, 54 districts have been selected and some areas of two districts of West Bengal have also been selected and about Rs. 3 crores and odd have been sanctioned for this programme. It is a part of the nation-wide scheme. West Bengal also finds a place in the list. This programme was taken up for the first time in the Fourth Plan and this programme will be enlarged very much in the Fifth Plan. A very sound basis will be provided. I cannot anticipate that there will not be any difficulty. It will be rash on my part if I say there will be no difficulty in future. The programme which will be taken up in these areas can substantially provide relief and protection to drought-prone areas in such parts of the country.

As far as West Bengal Government is concerned, you see how quick they have been to take up measure. For instance, the State Government has placed funds and foodgrains worth Rs. 1.95 crores for test relief works. Another sum of Rs. 93.45 lakhs has been sanctioned for gratuitous relief. The CARE is undertaking a scheme for works programme costing about Rs. 1 crore. The State Government has sanctioned Rs. 93.45 lakhs exclusively for distribution to the old and infirm persons. Orders have been issued for the execution of one test relief scheme in each Anchal.

A number of hon. Members made a reference to the drinking water facility. Now, whenever a drought situation develops, firstly, the agriculture suffers and, secondly, the drinking water become scarce. A sum of Rs. 1.95 crores has been made available to the Health Department of the State by the West Bengal Government to see that drinking water facility is made available to a very large number of villages. Besides that, 200 big water tankers have been supplied for carrying water.

[Shri Annasaheb P. Shinde]

The Central Government Health Department has deputed two officers immediately to look into the problems of drinking water scarcity. As far as West Bengal villages are concerned, I have no doubt in my mind that as soon as they come back, they will submit a report to the Health Department and necessary steps will be taken.

As far as the Central assistance is concerned, may I submit that West Bengal relief operations will not be allowed to suffer for lack of funds? As I said, we are aware of the difficulties of the people. This is a Government which would like to respond to the sufferings of the people and see that no bureaucratic or administrative weaknesses are allowed to come in the way of providing relief. A large number of Ministers are touring various parts of West Bengal. They would like to see that no administrative draw-backs come in the way of providing relief. The West Bengal Government has already approached the Centre for providing financial assistance. We have found that at the moment, the ways and means position of West Bengal Government is not difficult and is quite satisfactory. As the House knows, there is a set pattern of providing relief. According to the Finance Commission's report, about Rs. 2.61 crores have to be provided as an inbuilt provision to provide relief to drought areas in the West Bengal Government's budget. That provision is there. Therefore, the West Bengal Government has gone ahead with providing the necessary relief. The West Bengal Government has requested the Centre to depute a Central team. Normally, as soon as drought situation develops, the State Government reports to us and we depute a Central team. I would like to repeat that the very purpose of deputing a Central team is to avoid red tape and delay. The representatives of all Ministries—the Planning Commission, Finance, Agriculture and Health—go there; they consult the State Governments, see the situation and recommend ceilings. Once those ceilings are accepted, normally Government proceeds on that basis.

Actually, one of the officers of the Planning Commission, Mr. Agarwal, has proceeded to West Bengal today morning for studying the drought conditions. The Central team is being constituted; the other mem-

bers are expected to join very shortly. Let me again repeat that in deputing the Central team there would not be any delay, any red-tape. As soon as the Central team goes there and reports back to us, we shall be taking steps to provide the necessary Central assistance. Meanwhile, I would like to assure the West Bengal Government that, as soon as they find that the amount which is available in their budget is spent—we would not like to give the excuse that the Central team has not yet finalised its report and therefore we cannot give money—, we are prepared to see that the necessary funds are provided to the West Bengal Government even if the Central team takes some time, a week or two, to finalise its report. I do not think, there will be any difficulty in taking the vigorous measures which have been planned by the West Bengal Government, in providing relief. The relief that will be provided will be gratuitous relief—relief for drinking water, relief by way of providing employment to people because that is the most important thing. Even if foodgrains are there, what will you do? Necessary employment should be provided. I am glad that the West Bengal Government have taken up the programme of sinking tubewells. It would not only provide employment but will create permanent productive assets. The whole approach appears to be so sound. Despite all the difficulties, the way in which the West Bengal Government is trying to assert itself, assert its authority, in providing relief, I have no doubt in my mind that this calamity will later on be considered to have afforded a good opportunity for development just as it did in Bihar. Mr. Ramavatar Shastri may be knowing that the drought situation in Bihar in 1966-67 was very grave; it was a very difficult situation at that time, but it afforded a brilliant opportunity for taking up large scale development programmes on agriculture. The tempo of minor irrigation development in Bihar was so much in 1966-67 as a result of the drought there. I hope, the same thing will happen here also and large scale programmes will be implemented by the West Bengal Government with the full support and financial assistance from the Centre.

I do not think that I should take more time of the House. Let me assure all the Members again that in any part of the

country, wherever there are problems, we will see that necessary measures are taken and the human suffering is minimised to the extent possible.

adjourned to meet again tomorrow at 11.00 a.m.

10 25 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Wednesday, May 24, 1972/Jyatstha 3. 1894 (Saka).

MR. CHAIRMAN : The House stands